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PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA - TRENDS AND RESPONSES

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INTRODUCTION¹

Underpinning the concept of an African Renaissance is an increasing determination to find 'African solutions to African problems'. In the realm of peace and security, this sentiment has been clearly expressed by His Excellency Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). For example, in his opening address to the Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of Member States of the OAU Central Organ, Salim stressed that, "... OAU Member States can no longer afford to stand aloof and expect the International Community to care more for our problems than we do, or indeed to find solutions to those problems which in many instances, have been of our own making. The simple truth that we must confront today, is that the world does not owe us a living and we must remain in the forefront of efforts to act and act speedily, to prevent conflicts from getting out of control."²

Nowhere have these sentiments been more loudly and clearly echoed than in the burgeoning debate on the future of peacekeeping in Africa - a debate which is increasingly focused on efforts to enhance African capabilities for the conduct of peace operations. The purpose of this paper is to take stock of current trends in international peacekeeping *vis-à-vis* the perceived problem of peacekeeping in Africa, and to briefly outline progress and prospects towards the resolution of this problem.

TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING

Peacekeeping is perhaps the most promiscuous word in the world of international relations. She is everybody's whore and yet somehow retains her magic when her lover sees that her favours are being illicitly shared by many another. Indeed, even amid our pain at being denied her exclusive fidelity, we are proud of her adaptability to all sorts of circumstances, to all sorts of company - from Sinai to Sarajevo, from Cyprus to Cambodia, Liberia, and Somalia.³

The threats and opportunities arising from the (equally hackneyed) 'changed post Cold War security environment' undoubtedly contributed to the mutation of international peacekeeping practice. However, the former United Nations Secretary-General played a key, though obviously unintentional role in the 'prostitution' of peacekeeping, through the publication of his *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992. In all fairness, Boutros Ghali did attempt to distinguish between a new array of 'conflict management tools' supposedly available to the international community, including 'preventive diplomacy', 'peacemaking', 'peacekeeping', 'peace enforcement', and 'peacebuilding'. However, most of these 'tools' did not come with clear instruction manuals, and most actors remained comfortable with the principles and practices established during half a century of UN peacekeeping.

'Peacekeeping' has thus remained the favoured term to describe a diverse range of latter day multinational interventions, many of which have borne little or no resemblance to traditional blue helmet operations conducted with consent, impartiality and without resort to force. Indeed, aberrations have included air strikes against recalcitrant parties, a man-hunt for factional leaders, and even a naval bombardment of the capital of a 'host country'. Without dwelling on the morality or efficacy of forceful third-party interventions, suffice it to say that the time is ripe for greater conceptual and semantic clarity on what is and is not peacekeeping.⁴

Despite the supposedly broad array of conflict management techniques, international attention remains fixed on 'peacekeeping', or the utility of multinational military interventions as an essential element in the amelioration or resolution of armed conflicts. The frustrating aspect of this approach is that, as the perceived demand for peacekeeping increases, the capacity of the UN to deliver peacekeepers seems to have diminished.

For example, the UN was able to provide neither the mandate nor the means to assist in terminating the destructive civil war which racked the Republic of Congo during 1997. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan approached the Security Council with a plan for a force of no fewer than 1 600 to 1 800 peacekeepers, plus support units and UN military observers. He looked especially to the countries of the region to provide soldiers 'to try and stabilise the situation and ensure that there is a cease-fire'. However, he also made it clear that the UN would not act before there was a firm cease-fire and evidence that the warring parties were determined to seek political conciliation. With Annan still pleading with the Security Council to prepare to send in a peacekeeping force, Brazzaville fell to the forces of General (again President) Denis Sassou-Nguesso on 15 October 1997. This concluded the presidency of democratically-elected Pascal Lissouba, and crowned yet another violent and unconstitutional regime transfer in Central Africa.

The Congo example reinforces the notion that international peacekeeping is in a state of crisis in terms of finances, doctrine, co-ordination, and quality troop contributions. Indeed, Kofi Annan was forced to admit (in his UN Report on Reform, released three months before the fall of Brazzaville) that, "*[t]he United Nations does not have, at this point in its history, the institutional capacity to conduct military enforcement measures under Chapter VII [of the UN Charter] ... The Organisation still lacks the capacity to implement rapidly and effectively decisions of the Security Council calling for the dispatch of peacekeeping operations in crisis situations.*"⁵

This reality is reflected in the declining number of UN missions and peacekeepers worldwide. While the number of troops deployed on UN operations ballooned from 10 000 in 1989 to 70 000 in 1995, this number has dwindled over the past two years to some 13 000 today, and will probably stabilise around levels more common in the eighties.

On the other hand, the number of non-UN 'peacekeeping' missions has increased in recent years. Substantial and forceful missions have been conducted since 1990 by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa, and since July 1992 by Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Tadjikistan. However, it is since the 40 000-strong NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) took over from the over-extended UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the former Yugoslavia at the end of 1995, that the idea of regional peace operations has steadily gained ground. In 1997, a 6 000-strong Italian-led multinational force intervened in the civil turmoil in Albania. This ad hoc multinational protection force (MPF) had a Chapter VII UN mandate to "*facilitate the safe and prompt delivery of humanitarian assistance and to help create a safe environment for the missions of international organisations in Albania.*"⁶ The relative effectiveness of NATO in Bosnia and the MPF in Albania has lent credence to the argument that regional capacities for conducting peace operations allow for effective multinational intervention where the UN lacks the capability or the will to act.

The UN now seems willing to hand over responsibility for peace and security to any form of 'coalition of the willing', without necessarily having any clear notion of legality, higher direction, or requiring the concerned support of the international community. For example, the precedent was set for stretching Chapter VIII of the UN Charter to its limits in the Central African Republic when, on 6 August 1997, the Security Council retrospectively authorised the 800-member Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) under a Chapter VII mandate.⁷ UN member states were not assessed for any portion of the mission costs, which had to be borne by participating countries.⁸

After a brief experiment with large scale, multifunctional peacekeeping and 'peace enforcement' operations (1989-1995), the UN is now conducting much smaller and more

specialised monitoring missions, while delegating the large scale, personnel intensive functions to regional organisations and arrangements. On the other hand, where more robust 'peacekeeping' is being done by regional organisations and alliances, UN missions have been deployed to observe the 'peacekeepers' as well as the belligerents (for example UNOMIL in Liberia, UNOMIG in Georgia, and UNMOT in Tadjikistan). Contemporary UN observer missions also have an increasing slant towards specialisation - most notably in the area of policing.

According to the UN handbook, the mission of Civilian Police is to "*undertake the supervision or control of local civil police in order to ensure that law and order are maintained effectively and impartially, and that the human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully protected.*"⁹ While many multifunctional peace operations since UNTAG have included a significant civilian police component, the role of the police is now eclipsing that of the military in a number of ongoing UN operations. For example, the two most recently established missions are dedicated exclusively to issues of policing - the UN Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONHU), and the UN Police Support Group in Croatia. Of course, MIPONHU follows on two previous UN missions which were also dedicated to the professionalisation of the Haitian National Police - UNSMIH (July 1996 to June 1997) and UNTMIH (August to November 1997).

The mandate of the longer-standing UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995 to present) is also concerned exclusively with law enforcement activities, and it is executed by some 2 000 civilian police from forty countries (with only three military support personnel). And, while not exclusively devoted to policing matters, the UN Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) has some 361 civilian police. With the gradual withdrawal of military personnel, the mission's police component continues to verify the neutrality of the Angolan National Police, the incorporation of UNITA personnel into the national police, as well as the quartering and occasional deployment of the rapid reaction police.

These broader trends in international peacekeeping seem to be ignored, however, when it comes to efforts to resolve conflict on the African continent. More so than any other region, Africa is seen as presenting a unique challenge to those concerned with the maintenance of international peace and stability. The initial post-Cold War success stories of UN peacekeeping in Namibia and later Mozambique have been overshadowed by the tragedies of Somalia and Rwanda, and the ambivalent outcome of extensive UN involvement in the sticky Angolan peace process.

THE PROBLEM OF 'PEACEKEEPING' IN AFRICA

The UN and the rest of the international community face seemingly insurmountable hurdles in trying to bring stability to conflict-ridden African states. The problem of effective intervention is almost as complex as the type of conflicts that demand efforts at amelioration, and the obstacles are conceptual, contextual, political, and practical in nature. In the absence of political will and public support, of financial and other resources, and of a 'recipe' for success which is acceptable to their own populations and to Africa, luke-warm Western commitments to the resolution of African conflicts are fast growing cold.

For the past decade, African conflicts have been characterised by the combination of an internal or international conflict with serious human rights violations and large scale suffering among the threatened civilian population, which has inevitably resulted in large numbers of refugees and displaced persons. Many of these conflicts have deep-rooted causes, such as:

- a lack of coincidence between nation and state, ethnic tensions and the suppression of minorities;
- corrupt and dictatorial regimes;
- support for such regimes by international arms traders;
- chronic poverty and underdevelopment; and
- a grinding debt burden.

However erroneously, the resources and energies of the international community tend to be mobilised around the symptoms, rather than the causes of such conflicts - particularly when these include genocide or civil war. The situation is further complicated by the fact that most of Africa's actual and potential conflicts are internal ones within the state, which impedes

international attempts to broker peace. The perceived futility of attempting to solve African crises was finally realised when the international community tried to save the people of Somalia from self-destruction in an operation which lasted from 1992 to 1995.

The three-year UN intervention in Somalia cost the international community over \$1 685 million. A total of 150 peacekeepers died - 114 as a result of hostile acts. The death of eighteen United States soldiers on 3 October 1993 had an indelible impact on US policy on multilateral peace operations. In May 1994, the Clinton Administration's Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25) decreed that the US would not intervene in future crises unless American national interests were clearly at stake, and the mission had clear and limited objectives, including a well-defined exit strategy.¹⁰

UN officials involved in the mission were left with a conviction that the use of force should be avoided in future peace operations, as the degree of destruction in Somalia was not matched by the achievement of overall (political) mission objectives. The US, on the other hand, ascribed mission failure to the fact that not enough force was used. The UN Secretary-General was left with the black and white options of either defensive peacekeeping or high-intensity enforcement. Somalia was thus the turning-point, at which the international community lost all desire to experiment further with 'middle ground' operations in Africa.¹¹

Nowhere was this 'Somalia effect' so dramatically and tragically demonstrated as in the nearby tiny country of Rwanda.¹² In the presence of a weakly supported and grossly under-resourced UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, as many as 500 000 civilians were killed between April and August 1994. Throughout the worst of the massacre, UNAMIR had fewer than 500 soldiers deployed. It is estimated that, of a total population of approximately seven million, a further three million were internally displaced, and more than two million fled to neighbouring countries. As the then UN Secretary-General observed, the international community's delayed reaction to the genocide in Rwanda demonstrated graphically its extreme inadequacy to respond with prompt and decisive action to humanitarian crises entwined with armed conflict in Africa.

BUILDING AFRICAN 'PEACEKEEPING CAPACITY'

After the debacle in Somalia and the shame of Rwanda, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) soon became the focal point for a number of initiatives to devolve responsibility for responding to African crises to African players themselves. By January 1995, the OAU Secretary General observed that there was a proliferation of initiatives coming from outside Africa, all with the aim of supporting OAU efforts in the area of peacekeeping. He noted in particular that the British government had convened peacekeeping seminars in Camberly, Accra, Cairo and Harare, with the aim of examining various ways of enhancing the OAU's capabilities to prepare and deploy African peacekeepers.¹³

A French proposal for an African Intervention Force had also emerged from the Biarritz Francophone Summit of 1994. In essence, the French proposal aimed at the creation of a modest standing force, with possible contributions from African countries, which could be utilised during times of crisis. It was further proposed that this force would be mobilised under the auspices of the OAU and its member states. The French initiative included plans for an assessment of the capacity of member states in a particular subregion to intervene during crisis situations, the training of contingents in peace maintenance, and the training of a high command staff.¹⁴

The main thrust of both the British and French initiatives related to the setting up of a Multi-National African Rapid Deployment Peace Force. These initiatives, which enjoyed European and American support, further envisaged the pre-positioning of equipment at logistics bases in strategic points in Africa, with Europe, the US and others providing logistics while Africa would supply the personnel.¹⁵ There were also a number of long term capacity-building initiatives with an educational slant, mainly from Nordic countries, but these were subtle enough not to generate alarm.

Aside from these externally inspired initiatives, it was noted that a significant number of African countries had their own dedicated peacekeeping training programmes at the national

level. A June 1996 Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the OAU Central Organ, called for a working group of military experts to "*come out with practical and realistic recommendations on the technical issues raised*" on the concept and conduct of African peace operations. A study was subsequently commissioned to provide the OAU with a comprehensive overview of the training efforts of select countries which had either participated in peace operations, or which appeared to be imminent potential participants, and to provide the OAU with recommendations for the enhancement and co-ordination of such efforts.¹⁶

The primary recommendation of this survey was concerned with addressing the urgent need to develop a common concept, guidelines and doctrine for participation in peace operations by OAU member states. Other recommendations dealt with the provision of guidance and support from the OAU for the ongoing efforts of member states to train and prepare for participation in peace operations, and the harmonisation of subregional and continental efforts to manage conflict and maintain peace and security.

While this survey was in progress, the US announced its intention to contribute African peacekeeping training in a dramatic fashion. In October 1996, former US Secretary of State Warren Christopher travelled to Africa to promote a proposal for the establishment of an all-African military force. The African Crisis Response Force (ACRF), as it was then known, was to deal with African crises where insurrections, civil war or genocide threaten mass civilian casualties. The intermediate objective of the ACRF was to develop a rapid reaction capability for such contingencies. It was hoped that the ACRF would be used for humanitarian intervention in Burundi. However, this 'quick fix' solution was met with widespread scepticism, and the US transformed the idea of an African intervention force into a longer term capacity-building initiative. By mid-1997, the original ACRF idea had evolved into the African Crisis Response Initiative, or ACRI.

According to the US State Department, "*[t]he African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) is a training program which envisions a partnership with African and other interested nations to enhance African peacekeeping capacities, particularly the capacity to mount an effective, collective response to humanitarian and other crises.*"¹⁷ The US wasted no time in implementing the ACRI programme. By the end of 1997, infantry battalions in Senegal, Uganda, and Malawi had participated in two-month ACRI training sessions presented by US Third Special Forces Group, under the command of Colonel David McCracken. On 7 February 1998, an ACRI team began the fourth round of two-month engagements, when it started training an 837-strong battalion in Mali.¹⁸ In May 1998, the US began training a Ghanaian battalion, and similar training has been scheduled for Ethiopia later this year.¹⁹

Parallel to the earlier ACRI training sessions, a regional battalion peacekeeping exercise was presented by the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in conjunction with the British Army from 1 to 20 April 1997. Exercise Blue Hungwe involved a combined total of some 1 400 members of the armed forces of ten of the (then) twelve Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, as well as civilian police observers and international humanitarian non-government organisations (NGOs) and agencies. The troop contributions varied from 400 Zimbabweans and 300 South Africans to one or two observers from Botswana and Zambia. Mozambique, which recently emerged from civil war with the assistance of a UN peacekeeping mission, contributed a company of 130 troops from their new national army.

Also in Zimbabwe, a group of military experts and observers from 45 African nations met in Harare, from 21 to 23 October 1997 to draft peacekeeping proposals for consideration by the Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Central Organ of the OAU (24 to 25 October 1997). The meetings in Harare reflected the findings of the 1996 survey, and produced some significant results. No fewer than fifty substantive and specific recommendations were approved for consideration and adoption by the political organs of the OAU. Importantly, there was agreement on the need for African efforts to strengthen UN capacity for peace operations by providing the bulk of a ready force package for utilisation by the UN, and for the OAU to be more assertive in placing African crises on the UN agenda.

It was decided that the OAU concept for peace operations should be firmly linked to the

operationalisation of its Early Warning System within the Conflict Management Division, which will include a network linking in the early warning cells of the various subregional organisations in Africa, as well as research institutes, academics and civil society. The proposed concept for the conduct of OAU peace operations includes the use of subregional organisations, as a possible first line of reaction where the OAU is unable to act. The Chiefs of Defence Staff also recommended a brigade-sized contribution from each of the five African subregions as a starting point for a standby arrangements system, which could then be adjusted upwards or downwards according to evolving circumstances.

This recommendation accords with an April 1997 resolution of the armed forces chiefs of staff of West African states belonging to the subregional non-aggression and defence co-operation pact known as ANAD: Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.²⁰ Meeting in Niamey, Niger, the chiefs of staff called for the creation of a joint force to prevent or end conflict and to help with humanitarian operations within or beyond the region. According to the communiqué, "[t]he armed forces chief of staff, convinced of the opportunity and the need for the FPA (ANAD Peacekeeping Force), reaffirm their determination to work under the authority of their heads of state for the success of what is an historic initiative for the African continent."²¹

According to Niger's chief of staff, Amadou Moussa Gros, the envisaged force would be "a permanent force of specialist units on standby in their countries of origin ... which would assemble on demand whether for crises in ANAD's zone of influence or outside member countries."²² The command of the standing force could be given to a civilian or military person depending on the circumstances of its deployment. It was proposed that the force and its operations would be funded by contributions from ANAD member states, from friendly nations and international institutions. Significantly, the meeting followed joint manoeuvres earlier in the year between several ANAD members and France, the former colonial power, which were aimed at handling such volatile situations.

France, Britain and the US began to address African sensitivities to the lack of co-ordination in the conduct of these exercises and in external capacity-building initiatives in general. In the latter part of 1997, the three powers announced the launching of a 'P3' initiative, which would co-ordinate the ongoing and future efforts in the realm of peacekeeping training in Africa by the UK, the US and France. ACRI is the US component of this joint initiative, while the French element is known as RECAMP (Reinforcement of African Military Peacekeeping Capacity). The British element is known as the UK African Peacekeeping Training Support Programme.

It appeared as if the three powers were indeed starting to co-ordinate efforts during a ten-day RECAMP exercise, code named Guidimakha, which was hosted by Senegal at the end of February this year. African forces made up the bulk of the 3 700 troops, which included four battalions of troops from Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana and Guinea. France provided trainers and logistics, as well as a marine battalion, 100 paratroopers, Mirage fighter-bombers, helicopters, and field hospitals. As a symbolic gesture, the US sent a platoon of marines, and Britain provided a platoon from the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. However, this was clearly a French show, with France donating brand-new vehicles and equipment which will be stored in sealed tents as a pre-positioned equipment package.²³

The initiative framed during the 1997 Niamey meeting of ANAD chiefs of defence staff also seems to have inspired another major peacekeeping exercise in the region. From 15 to 22 April 1998, a six-nation West African military exercise, code named Cohesion Compienga 98, was held for the purpose of preparing troops for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations. Held in Burkina Faso, this exercise involved some 4 000 troops from Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.²⁴ While Benin enjoys observer status at ANAD meetings, it is interesting to note the presence of Chad and (especially) Nigeria in the force configuration. Nigeria would obviously be interested in breaking down the ANAD/ECOWAS divide and participating in exercises outside the P3 framework.²⁵

On the opposite side of the continent, the ACRI idea seems to be gaining in popularity. A further regional peacekeeping exercise is scheduled for East Africa in June this year. Code named Natural Fire 1998, the exercise will be conducted in Kenya, and will involve some 2

000 combat troops from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as those of the US Central and European Commands.[26](#)

Not to be outdone, the armies of the SADC region are also planning a large follow-on to Blue Hungwe for 1998. During November, the South African National Defence Force will host the second regional peacekeeping field exercise at its Army Battle School in Lohatla. The aim of Exercise Blue Crane will be "*to enhance the capacity of SADC military forces for peace support operations.*" It is envisaged that there will be a brigade headquarters with three battalions under command. As far as vehicles are concerned, the SANDF will have to provide for all contingents except Zimbabwe, Namibia and Lesotho. Aircraft will also be scarce, with limited contributions from Zimbabwe. The SANDF will have to provide the rest (light aircraft, transport and helicopters), tailored according to the exercise scenario.[27](#)

Increasingly sensitive to the issue of foreign domination, the Southern Africans seem determined to prevent external powers from dictating the size and shape of the exercise, although they would obviously welcome outside support according to needs identified by the regional exercise planning committee.

RESPONDING TO THE RESPONSE

The Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (Harare, October 1997) dealt not only with modalities for enhancing African peacekeeping capabilities, but also discussed the impact of foreign capacity-building initiatives such as some of those outlined above. The participants decided that African training for peace operations should not be held hostage to the availability of foreign donated equipment. Africans should train with what they have available on inventory in their armed forces and adapt their concepts for the conduct of peace operations accordingly.

Deep concern was expressed about the emerging trend towards intensive bilateral foreign initiatives aimed at contingent-level training for peace operations. Where national contingents are trained for employment in a multinational environment, it was felt that the end users (the UN, OAU or subregional organisations) should play a key role in determining the parameters of such training. It was therefore recommended that all foreign training assistance for peace operations should be within the parameters and concepts of the UN and OAU, and that these should be of general benefit to the entire region or subregion.

As if to address such concerns, towards the end of 1997, P3 representatives announced plans to create an Africa Peacekeeping Support Group, open to all interested states, that would meet regularly under UN and OAU aegis to facilitate international co-ordination on peacekeeping training activities. The first such meeting, on Enhancing African Peacekeeping Capacity, was convened by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York on 5 December 1997. It was chaired by Mr Bernard Miyet, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and was attended by official representatives from 59 member states.

The primary objective was to provide an open platform for candid discussion regarding the enhancement of African peacekeeping efforts among the UN, the OAU, regional, subregional groups and interested states. Bearing in mind the limitations of existing resources, the DPKO offered to serve as the focal point for the overall co-ordination of initiatives and encouraged all delegations to submit their ideas and intentions towards strengthening Africa's preparedness for peacekeeping.

The OAU representative reiterated the Organisation's priorities in terms of peacekeeping and conflict resolution, i.e. early warning systems, with concerted peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. While the OAU welcomed any initiatives in support of these goals in principle, it emphasised that African priorities must guide such efforts above all else. The Organisation wishes to avoid any activities which might result in creating spheres of influence in Africa or in dividing the continent linguistically, or otherwise. The OAU envisioned its role as absolutely central to the definition of all requisite needs and parameters for the implementation and monitoring of any initiatives. Fully expecting the UN to act in accordance with its obligations,

the OAU expressed its concern over the reluctance of the Security Council and the international community to react to African crises with timely support.

In so far as there remained several areas requiring further clarification (e.g. funding, logistics, command/control, etc.), the formal position of the OAU on external capacity-building initiatives had yet to be finalised.²⁸ Indeed, despite the laudable efforts of the meeting in New York, the attitudes of several key OAU member states towards foreign capacity-building initiatives seemed to harden at the 67th ordinary session of the OAU Council of Ministers meeting which ended on 28 February 1998.

At this meeting, Nigeria led three other states in strongly opposing Western initiatives for enhancing African peacekeeping capabilities, saying the manner in which it was construed was an attempt to divide Africa and weaken its efforts to take charge of its own security. Nigeria's foreign minister, Tom Ikimi, expressed grave concern at what he perceived as an attempt to weaken the OAU and collective African efforts by drawing countries into initiatives designed to divide the continent into Anglophones and Francophones.

Other delegates also opposed the P3 initiative on the grounds that it favoured selected countries for training in peacekeeping, instead of leaving the decision to the OAU, the continent's foremost political body. The debate led the Council to revise the draft decision before it that had expressed support for the Western initiative. In the revised version, the Council took note of the initiative, but said that any initiative aimed at enhancing Africa's capacity should take into account the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council, and that it should also be within the framework of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

In its final decision on the issue, the Council asked Secretary General Salim to continue monitoring the various initiatives aimed at enhancing Africa's peacekeeping capacity. The Ministers also asked Salim to work closely with the UN in this respect, with a view to ensure that the OAU's views and concerns are addressed in the implementation of these initiatives.²⁹

Despite the apparent OAU intransigence, which is obviously fuelled by a few influential member states, the 'building-block' approach to African peacekeeping capacity-building removes many political obstacles to external assistance. It has become increasingly popular to work at the grassroots level, rather than pursue a top-down approach. In the case of ACRI, the focus is squarely on unit-level assistance, and the battalion is essentially the building block of any army. But this approach does have its disadvantages - it relieves politicians of the responsibility to address pressing policy issues pertaining to peace support operations and the need for an integrated approach to the maintenance of international peace and security. It certainly does not address broader issues of military professionalism as these pertain to the entire armed forces of the host nation.

Zimbabwe, for example, has been accepted as the lead nation for peacekeeping training in the SADC region, and its military staff college houses the Southern African Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre, as well as the SADC Clearing House for Peacekeeping Training and Education. However, a recent parliamentary report has condemned the neglect of the country's armed forces, which are said to be suffering from an acute shortage of transport, food and uniforms, as well as overcrowded barracks and deplorable health services. Force morale has been further afflicted by a recently introduced system of forced leave which is designed to save rations. The air force is only able to keep its small and dwindling fleet of aircraft flying through the use of parts 'cannibalised' from grounded and condemned aeroplanes. The demoralised defence force, which now numbers some 35 000 after personnel cuts of 16 000 over the past five years, can take little comfort in official government pronouncements that Zimbabwe needs a "*small but well equipped force*."³⁰ If this dismal general military situation prevails in a regional centre of excellence for peacekeeping, then perhaps Africa is building capacity upon extremely shaky foundations.

Thus far, all foreign peacekeeping capacity-building initiatives have emphasised adherence to Chapter VI training (an increasingly irrelevant typology). However, regional operations have also found it necessary to use some enforcement powers, and are increasingly being

authorised under a Chapter VII mandate. This proved extremely useful in the Italian-led Operation Alba, which deployed to Albania with a limited mandate and an extremely robust force posture. In this case, 'overkill' quite conceivably produced the positive result where the authority of the peace force was not challenged.[31](#)

Perhaps the greatest flaw in the whole African capacity-building response is the failure to establish a credible linkage between capacity-building and capacity utilisation. The de-linkage was perhaps necessary in order to create the political space to move forward with externally sponsored training initiatives. However, by dropping the idea of creating a force, or at least a standby brigade or division, these initiatives lose much of their meaning. An inordinate amount of resources are spent worldwide on military training including, latterly, peacekeeping training. But this has not solved the problem of lack of political will to act on the part of the UN Security Council and potential troop contributing countries in the face of man-made crises in Africa. In other words, the various training initiatives may make a contribution to potential peacekeeping capacity, but potential capacity in the form of more infantry battalions is clearly not the problem at hand. There is, theoretically, an abundance of infantry battalions already available on standby for peacekeeping deployment.[32](#)

It could be argued that energies would be better devoted to making the UN system work, rather than attempting to create potential capacity for an (as yet unknown) alternative system in Africa. If the only global institution of international security is incapable of mounting an effective peace operation, it is surely fallacious to expect this of a regional organisation such as the OAU, or of African subregional organisations which were formed for the purpose of promoting economic integration.

On the other hand, if the West is crying 'no more Somalias', then Africans should surely be rallying around a cry of 'no more Rwandas'. If indigenous capacity-building could be linked to a no-nonsense approach to rapid reaction and timely and robust interventions, then future tragedies may well be averted. However, this is impossible while the focus of capacity-building initiatives is on the infantry battalions. African militaries can only do what they are well equipped and trained for, and can only go where their political masters send them. When the politicians choke basic military virility and professionalism, the armed forces become a useless instrument for peace or for war. Perhaps the unity of political and military will is, after all, the key to Nigeria's success as the pioneer of regional peacekeeping in Africa.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the UN 'peacekeeping family' will remain extremely reluctant to intervene in African crises for the foreseeable future. A large part of this family is already immersed in the SFOR operation in the former Yugoslavia, and will likely remain engaged in the inevitable follow-on mission. European peace and security is, after all, far more pertinent to the major powers and traditional peacekeeping countries than resolving pernicious conflicts in Africa. Moreover, there is a perceived way out - through teaching select African soldiers basic military skills and the finer points of UN peacekeeping practices, and perhaps supplying them with a bit of equipment.

Cynicism aside, there has been considerable progress over the past few years in building African capabilities for the conduct of peace support operations - as evidenced by developments at the level of the OAU and in the conduct of major subregional peacekeeping exercises. External powers have also begun to realise the necessity for co-ordinating bilateral training initiatives. However, the great flaw in African capacity-building initiatives is the very element that makes them more politically acceptable to Africans - the failure to establish a credible linkage between capacity-building and capacity utilisation.

The alternative, of course, is for Africa to accept the necessity to form regional coalitions of the willing to take care of its peace support operations. But this requires a strong military alliance such as NATO in the former Yugoslavia, or a lead nation willing to play a role akin to that of Italy in Albania, Russia in the CIS, and Nigeria in West Africa. Beyond token participation in 'safe' UN missions, Africans will only be able to convert peacekeeping capacity into meaningful outcomes when the prevalence of national interests is openly acknowledged, when a measure of partiality is accepted, and when countries are willing to

employ force against armed resistance to a legitimate mandate. Very few countries are willing to acknowledge this fact, let alone to make the sacrifices required by a more robust concept for intervention.

ENDNOTES

1. This is an edited version of a talk with the same title presented by the author at an ISS seminar on Building African Peacekeeping Capacity, Midrand, 20 May 1998. It is published as an ISS Paper in support of Training for Peace in Southern Africa, a project funded by the Royal Norwegian Government and executed in partnership with the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI).
2. Address by HE Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the OAU at the Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of Member States of the OAU Central Organ, Harare, 25 October 1997.
3. With apologies to Bernard Crick, who expressed similar sentiments on democracy in *In Defence of Politics*, London, 1964, p. 56.
4. A useful attempt at such clarification has been made by a South African Army officer, who uses 'peace mission' as a generic umbrella term to encapsulate the broad spectrum of possible third-party interventions to prevent, manage, or resolve conflict. Rossouw's framework illustrates the limited utility of a response to African conflicts which focuses, with flourish and fanfare, on 'building African peacekeeping capacity', without paying attention to the need for an integrated approach to international peace and security which acknowledges a humanitarian imperative and encapsulates the entire spectrum of conflict management 'tools', as well as the diverse array of actors which wield them. See A J Rossouw, *A South African Perspective on the Place of Peace Support Operations Within Broader Peace Missions*, [African Security Review](#), 7(1), 1998, pp. 36-43.
5. UN Report on Reform, 16 July 1997, <www.un.org/reform/track2/part2.htm>
6. For a useful analysis of the Albanian operation, see G Kostakos & D Bourantonis, *Innovations in Peacekeeping: The Case of Albania*, *Security Dialogue*, 29 (3) 1998, pp. 49-58.
7. The force, which had been operating without international approval since early 1997, consists of voluntary troop contributions by Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Kenya, Senegal and Togo. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, MISAB was entitled to use force in order to implement its mandate, which included the disarmament of rebellious factions of the CAR military.
8. The Security Council finally succumbed to pressures for the UN to take over responsibility for the CAR peace process from the hard-pressed MISAB contributors with effect from 15 April 1998. The role of the new UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) is to provide security long enough for the Government of the CAR to undertake the reforms it has promised and to provide its own security.
9. United Nations, *United Nations Civilian Police Handbook*, UNDPKO, New York, 1995, pp. 9-10.
10. According to PDD 25, the Administration will consider the factors below when deciding whether to vote for a proposed new UN peace operation (Chapter VI or Chapter VII) or to support a regionally-sponsored peace operation:
 - UN involvement advances US interests, and there is an international community of interest for dealing with the problem on a multilateral basis.
 - There is a threat to or breach of international peace and security.
 - There are clear objectives and an understanding of where the mission fits on the spectrum between traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement.
 - For traditional (Chapter VI) peacekeeping operations, a ceasefire should be in place and the consent of the parties obtained before the force is deployed.
 - For peace enforcement (Chapter VII) operations, the threat to international peace and security is considered significant.
 - The means to accomplish the mission are available, including the forces, financing and mandate appropriate to the mission.
 - The political, economic and humanitarian consequences of inaction by the international community have been weighed and are considered unacceptable.

- The operation's anticipated duration is tied to clear objectives and realistic criteria for ending the operation.
 - The Administration will continue to apply even stricter standards when it assesses whether to recommend to the President that US personnel participate in a given peace operation.
 - For an extensive summary, see PDD 25: Key Elements of the Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations, US Department of State, 22 february 1996, <ccnet.com/suntzu75/pdd25.htm>
11. J Chopra, Å Eknes & T Nordbø, *Fighting for Hope in Somalia*, Peacekeeping and Multinational Operations, 6, (Norwegian Institute for International Affairs), 1995, p. 40.
 12. United Nations, *Rwanda - UNAMIR*, unofficial record of events, United Nations Department of Public Information, September 1996.
 13. OAU Secretariat, Report on the OAU's Position Towards the Various Initiatives on Conflict Management: Enhancing OAU's Capacity in preventive Diplomacy, Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping, Central Organ/MEC/MIN/3 (IV), Addis Ababa, July 1995.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Ibid.
 16. The survey culminated in a report which was presented to the OAU Secretariat in February 1997. For the full text, see M Malan, W Nhara & P Bergevin, African Capabilities for Training for Peace Operations, [ISS Monograph Series, 17](#), Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, November 1997, (<www.issafrica.org/Iss/WWW%20PUBS/MONOGRAPHS/No.%2017/ contents%20html>
 17. Texts of a briefing by Ambassador Marshall McCallie on the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), US Department of State, Office of the Spokesman, Washington DC, 29 July 1997.
 18. J Fisher-Thompson, *Joint US-African Peacekeeper Training Kicks Off in Mali*, USIA, 26 February 1998.
 19. J Fisher-Thompson, *OAU Advice Proved Valuable in Formulating ACRI, McCallie Says*, USIS Washington File, 12 May 1998, p. 1.
 20. ANAD, or the *Accord de Non Aggression et d'Assistance en Matière de Défense* (Treaty of Non-Aggression, Assistance and Mutual Defence) was signed in June 1997 by Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Togo. Benin and Guinea Conakry were granted observer status at meetings. ANAD is basically a non-aggression and mutual defence and assistance agreement, for the purpose of maintaining peace and security in the region, and for consolidating the political independence of the signatories. It has a sizable permanent secretariat based in Abidjan.
 21. *West Africans Seek Joint Peace Force*, Reuters News Service, 27 April 1997.
 22. Ibid.
 23. B Edinger, *French Help Africans Test Continental Peace Force*, Reuters News Agency, 3 March 1998.
 24. *Exercise Begins Today*, PANA, 15 April 1998.
 25. ECOWAS membership comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. There have also been calls from several OAU member states for the ECOMOG intervention force to be transformed into a permanent African peacekeeping force readily available for deployment in crisis areas. See, for example, T Sannah, *Envoy Wants ECOMOG Transformed into African Peace Force*, PANA, 21 May 1998.
 26. PANA, 15 April 1998, op. cit.
 27. The participants of a SADC Seminar on Military Peacekeeping Co-operation, held in Harare from 9 to 10 May 1998 recommended the establishment of a SADC peacekeeping brigade (along the lines of the Danish-led Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG)) within the next five years. This seminar followed on an earlier seminar in Harare (2 to 4 May 1998) and a Danish-sponsored military 'fact-finding mission' to Denmark and Bosnia over the period 2 to 10 May 1998.
 28. Executive Summary of a Meeting on Enhancing African Peacekeeping Capacity, Trusteeship Council Chamber, New York, 5 December 1997.

29. G Hagos, *Nigeria Leads African Opposition To Western Peace Force Plan*, PANA, 1 March 1998.
30. C Chinaka, *Zimbabwe: Parliament Report Says Zimbabwe Army in Poor Shape*, Reuters News Service, 6 May 1998.
31. See Kostakos & Bourantonis, op. cit.
32. From Planning Data provided thus far, standby personnel resources which could be made available to the UN are as follows:

Infantry: 50 970

HQ Support: 3 778

Communications: 4 300

Engineers: 7 700

Logistics: 8 840

Air Services: 2 980

Health Services: 5 270

Individuals: 4 162

(MilObs, Civ pol, staff officers, etc)

Estimated Total: 88 000

Source: UNDPKO, United Nations Standby Arrangements: Status Report as of 02 February 1998,